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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Dutch Film on Islam

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post and other media reported that PM Ehud Olmert told

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as well as his Kadima faction on

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Monday that he would continue to allow construction in West Bank settlement blocs and East Jerusalem. Ha'aretz reported that on Monday Israeli officials announced plans for 1,400 new homes in East Jerusalem and nearby settlements, just hours after Secretary Rice's departure. Ha'aretz reported that on Monday, during a tour of the ultra-Orthodox West Bank settlement of Beitar Illit, Shas leaders said that PM Olmert had promised to restart frozen construction in all the settlements near Jerusalem, and lift the marketing freeze on 800 homes in Beitar Illit in the next few days. In return, Maariv and other media reported that Shas helped quash a no-confidence vote in the Knesset. Ha'aretz and other media also reported that Jerusalem's city hall announced on Monday that it would build 600 new apartments in Pisgat Ze'ev, a neighborhood in the capital's eastern sector.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday Defense Minister Barak softened his opposition to a plan to transfer control of the Gaza border crossings to PA government forces. Ha'aretz says that the change, made at the request Secretary Rice, is considered a major shift in Israel's policy.. Ha'aretz quoted a senior GOI source as saying that the change in Barak's position is probably also related to the discussions that Amos Gilad, head of the Defense Ministry's diplomatic-security bureau, is holding in Egypt on a "package deal" that would include a halt to rocket attacks from Gaza, containment of the arms smuggling into Gaza and reopening the border crossings.

The Jerusalem Post that on Monday Secretary Rice (in Jordan) and PM Olmert (in a speech to the Kadima faction) downplayed the chances of an Israeli-Palestinian deal by May. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted political circles following Israeli-Palestinian discussions and Likud Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu as saying that the negotiations are very advanced.

All media reported that on Monday afternoon a Palestinian man was killed by an Israeli civilian while trying to stab hitchhikers near the settlement of Shiloh. Israel Radio quoted Palestinian sources as saying that last night two Hamas militants were killed and two others were injured in a clash with IDF troops in the central Gaza Strip.

Yediot cited the Shin Bet's concern that exiled politician Azmi Bishara will recruit young Israeli Arabs for Hizbullah.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that Barak has allocated 30 million shekels (around \$8.5 million) to protect border communities.

Yediot cited the belief of Druze sources in the Golan that 60 students from the Golan studying in Damascus have received Syrian identity cards for themselves and their families.

Maariv reported that the Foreign Ministry will not allow Prof. Richard A. Falk, the newly appointed UN Human Rights Council special investigator on Israeli actions in the territories, to enter Israel as a diplomat. The paper wrote that Falk has compared Israel to the Nazis and supported suicide bombings.

All media reported that squabbling in the Labor Party reached the boiling point at Monday's meeting of its Knesset faction, with a harsh exchange between party leader and Defense Minister Ehud Barak and his predecessor, MK Amir Peretz. In an emotional outburst, Peretz accused Barak of being disconnected from reality and obsessed with being prime minister. Barak responded by calling Peretz "pathetic." Maariv reported that Barak told a few of his associates that he favors a union of his party with Kadima. Maariv reported that Peretz supporters who collaborated with billionaire politician Arkady Gaidamak have been ousted from the Labor Party.

Maariv reported that Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar and his predecessor, Shas mentor Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, are backtracking from their support for a law that would regulate organ donations in compliance with Jewish law.

The media reported that the carcinogenic substance dioxin was found on two more IAF F16-I fighter planes. The Jerusalem Post reported that visiting Czech Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanova told the

newspaper on Monday that the Czech Republic is in favor of Israel joining NATO in the face of Iran's continued race toward nuclear power.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Knesset members Yoel Hasson, Nadia Hilou, Moshe Kahlon, Shlomo Mula, and Ophir Pines-Paz recently met with California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger as part of a legislators' exchange organized by the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles.

Ha'aretz reported that Bank Leumi outdid Bank Hapoalim in 2007 with a 3.3 billion-shekel (around \$840 million) net profit. All in all, the media reported that the banks netted a 9 billion-shekel profit.

A poll commissioned by the Knesset's TV Channel and whose results were released on Monday reveals that 76 percent of Israeli Jews give some degree of support to transferring Israeli Arabs to a future Palestinian state.

The Jerusalem Post cited the results of a poll commissioned by the Washington-based Israel Project and conducted on March 18-20: Israel is not a top priority for U.S. voters, including Jews, and McCain backers are more likely to support Israel than their Democratic counterparts.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Time is running out and the self-deception is continuing. Not the Americans, but rather the Israelis will bear the results of this continued disorder."

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz: "Olmert's eagerness to achieve a kind of signed and sealed mutual defense pact with Bush before his term is up in exchange for a draft agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is not unreasonable."

Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "As for the claims that the negotiations are moving forward ... as of now those are still shadows on a wall, only seen by those deep in a cave of their own making."

Gilad Sharon, son of former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Israel cannot depend on the term of any American president -- even the friendliest one."

The Jerusalem Post editorialized: "With Damascus now assuming the Arab League presidency, it's hard to see the organization playing a constructive role in ushering in an era of peace and reconciliation. Still, a good place to begin would be for Arab leaders to address Israel's concerns about their March 2002 proposal."

Block Quotes:

I. "Fooling Ourselves"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (4/1): "Had Peace Now not published reports from time to time, it is doubtful anyone would have been aware of the continuing construction in the settlements.... During her visit this week, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that henceforth the Americans would keep an eye on Israel's easing of conditions for the Palestinians in the

West Bank. For years the same old dance has been going on in which the Americans scold and the Israelis promise, as though the Israelis have decided to make every effort to thwart the solution that everyone knows is the only solution. Time is running out and the self-deception is continuing. Not the Americans, but rather the Israelis will bear the results of this continued disorder. If there is any place forbidden for Israel to build even one more house, it is the West Bank, beyond the separation fence and anywhere it is clear to anyone with eyes to see that it is part of the Palestinian state. Such a state is an Israeli interest of the highest order. A new neighborhood in Ariel or Arab Jerusalem will not advance its establishment."

II. "Give and Take par Excellence"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in Ha'aretz (4/1): "To sit with folded arms until the inauguration of the next U.S. administration would be a serious mistake for Israel. The new

administration will face three problems that demand immediate attention: withdrawal from Iraq, the economic crisis and the Iranian bomb. So Olmert's eagerness to achieve a kind of signed and sealed mutual defense pact with Bush before his term is up in exchange for a draft agreement between Israel and the Palestinians is not unreasonable.... Can this work? Is it all 'hawa,' [air] as they say in Arabic? Is it all hot air? Is it political spin? Those who want to know should keep their eyes glued on Shas. At the moment, the silence from that corner says it all."

III. "Real Progress, or More Shadows on the Wall?"

Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (4/1): "The point that Plato [made in The Republic] is ... that all of us might be living in some kind of 'cave,' unable to gauge the authenticity of the images and words right in front of us.... If there really is progress being made between the two sides, the most concrete manifestations can be found in the easing of Israeli military restrictions for Palestinian civilians, concurrent with reported improvements in the conduct of the PA security apparatus in such places as Jenin. Those are indeed encouraging steps, small as they may be for now. As for the claims that the negotiations are moving forward, and there is still cause to believe a peace agreement will be reached by 2009 -- even a 'shelf agreement' that can be implemented at a later date -- as of now those are still shadows on a wall, only seen by those deep in a cave of their own making."

IV. "Negative Energy"

Gilad Sharon, son of former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/1): "Instead of making use of her time to explain to the world the blow being suffered by Israel through terror, the threats hovering over our heads, and the obligation to defend ourselves, the Foreign Minister is wasting her time in sterile talks with weak Palestinians who barely represent themselves.... The Foreign Minister is investing almost 100% of her energy in something which has virtually no chance of materializing.... Israel cannot depend on the term of any American president -- even the friendliest one. Our fate cannot be shaped primarily by the length of time left in the U.S. president's administration. There must be a wider perspective."

V. "A Constructive Role for the Arab League"

The Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/1): "Instead of reaching out, an Arab League in disarray has continued its hard-line, anti-Israel rhetoric. That's easier than bridging internal gaps between Hamas and Fatah, and over Iraq, Lebanon, and Alawite-led Syria's ever-closer melding with the Persian ayatollahs. [Arab League Secretary-General Amr] Moussa had to make the most of a summit

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boycotted by the kings of Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Morocco, as well as by Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Yemen's Ali Abdullah Salah. Hence his denunciation of invented Israeli 'war crimes' in Gaza, and perhaps also PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas's incongruent plea for League intervention to save "besieged" Palestinians. Comic relief was provided by Libya's Muammar Qadhafi, who helpfully pointed out that

Arab leaders hate and conspire against each other. With Damascus now assuming the Arab League presidency, it's hard to see the organization playing a constructive role in ushering in an era of peace and reconciliation. Still, a good place to begin would be for Arab leaders to address Israel's concerns about their March 2002 proposal."

¶2. Dutch Film on Islam:

Summary:

Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Radical Islam must be fought, but a racist, actually anti-Semitic, film only harms this battle."

Block Quotes:

"An Anti-Semitic Movie"

Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (4/1): "[In the Dutch film 'Fitna'] Islamists march behind Hitler and plan a Holocaust not only for Jews but for heretics everywhere.... Most Jews in the world will not support the

Jewish-jihadist stream. In its good days, Kahanism won no more than one Knesset seat. But according to innumerable surveys, radical Islam has gained support in the Muslim countries and the Muslim Diaspora that can be called by a thousand names, but certainly not 'marginal'.... [In Palestine] the majority voted for Hamas, an anti-Semitic movement and a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.... However, the film is misleading. Jews lived under the wings of Islam for centuries. Their lives were not a paradise, but they were not sent to ovens.... More importantly: Most victims of radical Islam are Muslims. It is worthwhile looking at the numbers. Many of them are trying to fight radical Islam. Many reformists are brave women. All of them are harmed by the movie, because it makes a crude, perhaps even racist, generalization. It places Irshad Manji, the Canadian writer, in the same boat as bin Ladin. Radical Islam must be fought, but a racist, actually anti-Semitic, film only harms this battle."

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